

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace Paragraph [0008] with the following paragraph:

Figure 2 is a longitudinal section view of the boot seal of Figure 1 shown in operative association with a pair of rotating joint members; and

Please replace Paragraph [0009] with the following paragraph:

Figure 3 is a sectional view taken along the line 3-3 of Figure 1 [;].

Please delete Paragraphs [0010] and [0011].

Please replace Paragraph [0012] with the following paragraph:

With reference to Figures 1 through 3 of the drawings, a boot seal constructed in accordance with the teachings of the present invention is generally indicated by reference numeral 10. The boot seal 10 is unitarily formed from a resilient material, such as natural or synthetic rubber or a suitable plastic, and is illustrated to include a flexible body portion 12, a coupling end 14 and a flange end 16. The boot seal 10 is shown in Figure 2 in conjunction with a mechanical joint 18 for transmitting rotary power. The mechanical joint 18 includes a first member, which is the internally splined output shaft 24 of a transfer case 22 in the particular example provided, and a second member, which is an externally splined shaft 20 that is associated with a propshaft 24a in the particular example provided. Although the exemplary ~~output shaft 24 splined shaft 20~~ is illustrated to include spline elements 26 that matingly engage a mating spline elements 28 that are formed on the splined output shaft 24, those skilled in the art will understand that various other means may be employed to couple the members of the mechanical joint 18 to facilitate the transmission of rotary power therebetween. Accordingly, the particular embodiment illustrated is not intended in any way to limit the scope of the present invention.

Please replace Paragraph [0014] with the following paragraph:

The coupling end 14 is coupled to a first end of the body portion 12 and is illustrated to include an annular clamp flange 40 that is sized to receive a conventional boot clamp 42, such as a boot clamp that is shown in U.S. Patent No. 3,402,436 to Oetiker, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference as if fully set forth herein. The inside diameter of the coupling end 14 is sized to engage the ~~splined shaft 24~~ splined shaft 20 in a slip-fit manner. Tightening of the boot clamp 42 secures the coupling end 14 to the ~~splined shaft 24~~ splined shaft 20 to thereby inhibit relative rotation therebetween. A plurality of radially extending ribs 44, which are coupled at a proximal end to the flexible body portion 12, serve to increase the strength and rigidity of the coupling end 14.

Please replace Paragraph [0015] with the following paragraph:

The flange end 16 is coupled to a second end of the body portion 12 opposite the coupling end 14. The flange end 16 is illustrated to include a flange seal portion 50 and an annular lip 52. The flange seal portion 50 is configured to create a primary seal against the ~~shaft 20~~ output shaft 24 to guard against the infiltration of moisture or debris into the body portion 12. In the particular embodiment illustrated, the flange seal portion 50 includes an attachment portion 54 that is configured to sealingly engage a mating groove 55 that is formed about the perimeter of the output shaft 24. Due to the resilient nature of the material from which the boot seal 10 is formed, the attachment portion 54 is configured to resiliently expand over the ~~shaft 20~~ output shaft 24 during the installation of the boot seal 10 and thereafter constrict around the outside diameter of the ~~shaft 20~~ output shaft 24 when aligned to the groove 55 to thereby frictionally engage the ~~shaft 20~~ output shaft 24. Construction in this manner is highly advantageous in that it eliminates the need for a conventional boot clamp. To aid the technician in installing the boot seal 10, a chamfer 56 may be formed on a leading edge 58 of the flange seal portion 50.

Please replace Paragraph [0017] with the following paragraph:

Although a sealed bearing 22b is seated in the housing 22a of the transfer case 22 to prevent the infiltration of dust and moisture into the transfer case 22, the barrier provided by the annular lip 52 provides an additional measure of protection by generally preventing most debris and moisture from reaching the seal 22c of the bearing 22b. Additionally, since the boot seal 10 rotates with the joint members of the mechanical joint 18 (i.e., the externally splined shaft 20 and the output shaft 24 in the example provided) during the operation of the mechanical joint 18, centrifugal force will tend to expel any debris and/or moisture that works its way between the annular lip 52, the bearing seal 22c and the shaft 20 to thereby further ensure the integrity of the seal 22c.

Please replace Paragraph [0018] with the following paragraph:

~~While the boot seal has been described thus far as including a coupling end that utilizes a conventional boot clamp, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention, in its broader aspects, may be constructed somewhat differently. For example, the boot seal may be configured with ends that are substantially identical to the flange end. Also, as shown in Figures 4 and 5 the boot seal 10a may be formed without discrete radially extending ribs that are shown in the above discussed embodiment to interconnect the annular lip 52 with either or both of the body portion 12 in the flange seal portion 50. Accordingly, although the invention has been described in the specification and illustrated in the drawings with reference to a preferred embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalents may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the claims. In addition, many modifications may be made to adapt a particular situation or material to the teachings of the invention without departing from the essential scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the invention not be limited to the particular embodiment illustrated by the drawings and described in the specification as the best mode~~

presently contemplated for carrying out this invention, but that the invention will include any embodiments falling within the foregoing description and the appended claims.